MOTHER AND CHILD

I look into my heart and ask myself:

“How does the idea of ‘God’ take root in my soul?”

What is the source of my belief, of surrendering myself to Him, of feeling peace when I trust Him, give thanks, and obey?

I find the answer again within myself:

In order to turn toward God, feelings of love, respect, trust, gratitude, and obedience must first exist in my heart. I must love people, trust them, and be grateful to them in order to rise to the love of the Almighty Creator, to give thanks to Him, and to practice reliance and obedience. Otherwise, how can a man who does not love his fellow human—whom he sees—love his Lord, whom he does not see?

I ask myself again:

How do I learn to love people and trust them? How do these feelings take root in my heart?

I find the answer in the relationship between a mother and the child she nurses:

A mother wishes to feed and protect the child she has brought into the world, for her instincts move her toward this. The child becomes happy, and thus the first seed of love is planted.

After some time, the child’s eyes are drawn to something he has never seen before; he cries out in fear and wonder. The mother immediately comes, takes him into her arms, and calms him. When he sees the strange object again, he looks at his mother and smiles. Thus, trust is established.

The mother rushes to the child’s cradle at every need. When he is hungry, thirsty, or crying, she comes. The child is calmed by the sound of her footsteps and the scent of her presence. In this way, feelings of love, trust, and gratitude begin to grow.

The child comes to love what his mother loves and smiles at it. This smile becomes a smile directed toward humanity. Thus, the seed of brotherhood is planted.

Before learning patience, the child is disobedient and cries. Yet he must wait to be fed and to be taken into arms. Nature—that is, life—does not respond to the child’s anger. Let him strike or scream; nature remains indifferent.

Likewise, the mother should not yield to the child’s unreasonable or excessive demands. Even if the child cries and shouts in anger, she must remain steady, for after a while the crying subsides. In this way, the first seeds of patience and obedience are planted. This is preparation for real life.

As time passes, the idea gradually takes root in the child’s mind that being angry with his mother is not proper behavior. He begins to sense that the world does not revolve around him, that his loving mother does not exist solely for him, and even that he himself is not placed in the world only for himself. This is the development of conscience.

Thus, moral development begins with the relationship between a mother and her infant. The first light of responsibility and justice has now entered the heart. Through love and trust toward his mother, the child rises toward love of the Creator.

However, the sense of independence gradually grows, and one day the child lets go of his mother’s hand and says:

“I no longer need my mother.”

The mother, in fact, has been preparing her child for this moment—the day he will stand on his own. With a very different tone than before, she says:

“My dear child, even if you no longer need me, you will always have a Lord to rely upon. When I cannot protect you, He will be your refuge.”

At that moment, a sense of comfort and the need to believe arise in the child’s heart. The trust and gratitude he once felt toward his mother are now directed toward the Creator.

And the child, when he misbehaves, feels that just as his mother’s gaze was upon him, so too is the gaze of God always upon him. He acts righteously in the presence of God, just as he once sought to please his mother.

Education that aims to elevate the human being must not neglect the foundation laid within the family. The later development of the seeds of love and respect sown between mother, father, and child requires a refined art.

And you, educator! If you neglect even for a moment the growth and development of these seedlings, all your efforts will be in vain. For the child is growing, and the new world surrounding him loudly proclaims with all its sensory temptations: “You belong to me now!”

You, educator!

You can no longer trust nature alone. For the world is full of wars, selfishness, plunder, violence, lies, and every form of deceit. Therefore, to protect the child, you must show him goodness and truth and strengthen him with the shared values accepted by humanity.